

**Los Angeles Filmforum presents**  
**Filmforum at 50, program 1: Classics of Los Angeles Experimental Film**  
**Sunday, November 16 2025, 7:30 pm**  
**At 2220 Arts + Archives**

Los Angeles Filmforum is the city's longest running organization dedicated to weekly screenings of experimental film, documentaries, video art, and experimental animation. 2025 is our 50th year. [www.lafilmforum.org](http://www.lafilmforum.org)

As the USA prepared to celebrate its bicentennial year, the nation took little notice of one small non-profit organization dedicated to screening avant-garde films. This cheery oasis of sanity and unconventionality amidst the miasma of Southern California arose from the efforts of Terry Cannon. The Neighborhood Church in Pasadena (at 301 N. Orange Grove Blvd) hosted that first season. After a special event screening in November 1975, it held a screening of *Zero de Conduite* by Jean Vigo on Friday Dec 12, 1975, and the organizations has been plugging away ever since. Filmforum's first full season, January-March, 1976, set a clear, high standard for the programs ever since. Starting off with four weeks dedicated to "The Ethnographic Film," in its first three months Filmforum embraced "The American Avant-Garde: West Coast," "Thee Films of Paul Robeson," "Sixteen Films Under Five Minutes," "Films of Sexy Humor," and "Women in Film." We will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of Filmforum with multiple screening and events over the next year with blasts from the past, films looking to the next fifty years, and visits from former directors and programmers of the organization. Tonight, we start with some highlights of experimental films made in Los Angeles, several of which by people linked to Filmforum. Works by Amy Halpern, Sara Kathryn Arledge, Maya Deren, James Whitney, Adam Beckett, Beth Block, Chick Strand, Pat O'Neill, and Craig Rice!

Thank you to all the volunteers, projectionists, programmers and board members who have made fifty years of Filmforum possible, and to all the filmmakers who have made great films for us to screen!

**Screening:**

**Invocation**, by Amy Halpern

1982, 16mm, color, silent, 2 min.

"A temporary sculpture; an invitation and benediction." (AH)

Amy was one of the wonderful people. First a key member of the Los Angeles Independent Film Oasis, which paralleled Filmforum in the late 70s and early 80s, and then one of our most vital audience members and filmmakers.

**Introspection**, by Sara Kathryn Arledge

1941, 16mm, color, sound, 7 min.

"Disembodied parts of dancers are seen moving freely in black space ... [they] form a moving and rhythmic three dimensional design of semi-abstract shapes." - Lewis Jacobs, "Avant-Garde Production in America," *Experiment in the Film*, Grey Walls Press, London, 1949

Purpose: to demonstrate a (then) new dance medium totally different from the stage. Audience: general public, dancers, artists.

Filmforum founder Terry Cannon and Mary Cannon befriended Sara Kathryn Arledge in her later years, hosted a show with her at Pasadena Filmforum, and ended up as caretakers of her art and films after her death. Filmforum still has her 16mm projector and Bolex camera and we hope to have it on display tonight.

**Meshes of the Afternoon**, by Maya Deren & Alexnader Hammid

1943, 16mm, b&w, sound, 14 min.

In 2015 the BBC named the film the 40th greatest American movie ever made.

Filed at their residence on North Kings Road in West Hollywood.

A large flower, the silhouette of a figure briskly walking away, a house key, a bread knife, a telephone receiver resting off the hook, and a spinning phonographic turntable define the shifting functional elements in *Meshes of the Afternoon* from which the film's evolving, malleable construct - the fragile and tenuously interconnected mesh of actual and perceived reality - is intriguingly (and ingenuously) mapped....

From this deceptively simple introductory premise, Maya Deren modulates the mise-en-scene of seemingly mundane objects to create overlapping, yet non-intersecting planes of existential reality, using permutations of recurring images - mirrored surfaces (the apparition's face, polished metal spheres, a hand mirror), glass, duality and doppelgangers - to represent variably interlocking narrative fragments of observation, inference, deduction, and memory.

Unfolding with the narrative discontinuity characteristic of nouvelle roman literature (creating an idiosyncratically dissociative filmic language that also characterizes Alain Resnais' subsequent feature films, particularly *Last Year at Marienbad* and *Je t'aime, je t'aime*), the film posits a series of subtle structural, temporal, and logical mutations, creating a sublimely recursive, mind-bending meditation on the interaction between experience and memory, domestic banality and violence, imagination and causation.

**Lapis**, by James Whitney

1963-1966, 16mm film, color, sound, 10 minutes

Unpublished work copyright 1966, James Whitney

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James Whitney's *Lapis* is a classic work of abstract cinema, a 10-minute animation that took seven years to create using mechanical analogue computer equipment. In this piece, smaller circles oscillate in and out in an array of colors evoking a metaphysical meditation while being accompanied by Indian sitar music. The patterns become hypnotic and trance-inducing. This work clearly correlates the auditory and the visual and is a wonderful example of the concept of personal abstract filmmaking.

James Whitney was born in Pasadena, California and lived all his life in the Los Angeles area. In the early 40s, while still in his teens, James began collaborating on abstract films with his older brother John (1917-95). Their series of *Film Exercises*, produced between 1943-44, are a remarkable achievement - visually based on modernist composition theory (like Schoenberg's atonal and serial music) with carefully varied permutation of forms manipulated with cut-out masks so that the image photographed is pure, direct light shaped, rather than the light reflected from drawings of objects in traditional animation. The eerie and sensuous glow of these forms is paralleled by a pioneer electronic music sound score composed by the brothers using an

elaborate pendulum device they invented to write out sounds directly onto the film's soundtrack area, with precisely controlled calibrations. At that time, before the perfection of recording tape, these sounds - with exotic "pure" tone qualities, mathematically even chromatic glissandos and reverberating pulsations, were truly revolutionary and shocking. The brothers won a Grand Prize at the 1949 Brussels Experimental Film Competition for the Film Exercises. After the Film Exercises, John began to pursue technological, theoretical, mathematical, architectonic and musical ideas which eventually led him to his masterful pioneer work in Computer Graphics. Meanwhile, James became increasingly involved in contemplative, spiritual interests - Jungian psychology, alchemy, yoga, Tao, Krishnamurti and consciousness expansion - which became the subject matter of the four films on which he has worked for over 30 years. James shares this spiritual preoccupation, by the way, with Kupka, Kandinsky, Mondrian, Rothko and many other non-objective artists. [Source: William Moritz, excerpted from 1984 Toronto Film Festival catalogue, Iota Center Website]

**Kitsch In Synch**, by Adam Beckett

1975, 16mm, color, sound, 4.5 minutes

This is an abstract animation that seems to get laughs. The soundtrack is why, mainly; it sounds like a large group of demented ducks enthusiastically and persistently seeking oneness with the all, via energetic chanting. BUBUBABU!!! The imagery is elaborate, brightly colored, and every single damned beat in the soundtrack has its own little bump.

Adam Beckett (1950-1979) was an animator, special effects artist and teacher, most notable for his work on Star Wars. Beckett developed a unique technique that involved creating a loop of images that continued to evolve with each loop cycle. In this way a series of drawings, say 12, would be shot, modified and re-shot. So while the final artifacts of the film would amount to only a handful of images, the film itself appears as a growing and expanding abstract loop. This was augmented with phasing of the imagery, changing the area of view, and other sophisticated uses of the optical printer. He attended the California Institute of the Arts from 1970 to 1975 as part of the first class of the Experimental Animation program. While there, he learned from instructors such as Jules Engel and Pat O'Neill, and worked alongside animators including Kathy Rose and Sky David.

**Twelve**, by Beth Block

1977, 16mm, color, sound, 9 min.

The first three parts of a twelve-part film which explores the history of imagery. The first part consists of hand-painted and scratched film, the second part incorporates the use of negative space and the third part uses elaborate optical printing techniques to incorporate photographic imagery into the increasingly complex images.

Beth Block was president of the Filmforum board for a number of years.

From Beth: "I discovered Filmforum in the mid-70's as I was entering the film industry. It was a welcome respite from the commercialism and grind of churning out exploding stomachs and graphic laser deaths. In those days, it moved from the bank vault in Pasadena to a newly "revitalized" downtown in which cars had to be guarded from intruders during the screenings until eventually we found a home at LACE in the industrial district. I was President of the Board when our Administrative Director, Richard Amromin and our Programming Director, Buddy

Kilchesty were both stricken by serious illness and I found myself in the tenuous position of doing the programming, projecting, and searching for a new director. Eventually, Jon Stout was hired to right the ship. Here's to another fifty years!"

**Cartoon Le Mousse**, by Chick Strand

1979, 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes

"Chick Strand is a prolific and prodigiously gifted film artist who seems to break new ground with each new work. Her recent "found footage" works such as CARTOON LE MOUSSE, are extraordinarily beautiful, moving, visionary pieces that push this genre into previously unexplored territory. If poetry is the art of making evocative connections between otherwise dissimilar phenomena, then Chick Strand is a great poet, for these films transcend their material to create a surreal and sublime universe beyond reason." - Gene Youngblood

Chick Strand's accomplishments as an artist spanned more than three decades. In the early 1960s, with a new anthropology degree in hand, she turned her attention to ethnographic filmmaking. Her early work focused on Meso-American cultures explored through the language of the experimental documentary. In 1961, she founded Canyon Cinema with Bruce Baillie, an organization that, in 1965, spawned the San Francisco Cinematheque. They organized screenings of experimental, documentary and narrative films in East Bay backyards and community centers. Acting in response to a lack of public venues for independent movies, they were part of a wider explosion in American avant-garde film. The era was one of social idealism and communal energy, and the films they showcased boldly embraced purely cinematic visual expression and cultural critique. Strand left Northern California in the late 1960s to pursue studies in ethnographic film at UCLA. She then joined the faculty of Occidental College, where she served as the director of the film as art program for a quarter of a century. In the 1970s she continued to define her visual technique, and her subjects more frequently became women. She soon evolved a distinctive film style: backlit subjects photographed in close up and in motion, with a handheld telephoto lens. The technique produced sensual, lyrical images that became Strand's signature. Her entire filmography numbers nearly a score of works, and along the way, she has also become an accomplished photographer and painter. A crucial member of the experimental film world of Los Angeles for decades, we'll be presenting her major film *Soft Fiction* on December 7.

**Foregrounds**, by Pat O'Neill

1979, 16mm, color, sound, 13.5 minutes

"FOREGROUNDS, like SAUGUS SERIES, is devoted almost entirely to carefully constructed spatial ambiguities. The most visceral of these prints a rotating boulder, occupying half of the screen, over a slow lateral pan across the desert (painted by Neon Park). A faint superimposition of leaves on top of the landscape has the effect of pushing its vista farther back in space. Correspondingly, the boulder bulges out of the picture-plane like a Cezanne apple. The effect is so strong that even when O'Neill begins to animate 'scratches' over the image, one's eye refuses to surrender the illusion of volume." - J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*

Pat O'Neill has been deeply involved in Los Angeles culture since the late 1960's. A founding father of the city's avant-garde film scene, an influential professor at CalArts and an optical effects pioneer, he is known for his works from the early 1960's onwards which are highly graphic, layered and reflexive assemblages based on a mastery of optical printing techniques.

In O'Neill's films, boundaries fade, narrative collapses and layers of imagery draw the viewer simultaneously towards and away from linear meaning. O'Neill has combined found footage with experimental montage and compositing techniques to create a graphic language that deals with how different, often disparate elements assembled together in the frame relate to one another. His innovative optical techniques anticipated our digital landscape well before its time.

Several of his many avant-garde films produced between 1963 and 2006 are considered classics (especially 7362 (1967), RUNS GOOD (1970), SAUGUS SERIES (1974), WATER AND POWER (1989, TROUBLE IN THE IMAGE (1996), and THE DECAY OF FICTION (2002). WATER AND POWER, his first 35 mm. feature, which journeys through a California of imaginary intensity, was the Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner in 1990 and hailed as a touchstone for filmmaking in the future.

### **Filmforum Film**, by Craig Rice

1980, 16mm, b&w, silent, 4 min.

Craig Rice, a Filmforum member whose work had screened there, made a delightful documentary, 'Filmforum Film,' showing the neighborhood, Cannon at work, and some of the audience in attendance. -- David James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde*, 2005

Terry Cannon said that it was made as their report for the NEA for a grant received.

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Los Angeles Filmforum screenings are supported by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture, the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles. This activity is supported in part by the California Arts Council, a state agency. Learn more at [www.arts.ca.gov](http://www.arts.ca.gov). We also depend on our members, ticket buyers, and individual donors.

Coming soon:

Nov 23 – Rajee Samarasinghe: *Your Touch Makes Others Invisible*, LA premiere, Samarasinghe in person

Nov 28 – co-presenting Sky Hopinka's *Malni—Towards The Ocean, Towards The Shore*, at the Philosophical Research Society

Nov 30 - John Lilly and the Earth Coincidence Control Office, by Courtney Stephens and Michael Almereyda, at the Philosophical Research Society, Stephens in person

Dec 7 – Filmforum 50: The Women's Gaze: Chick Strand's *Soft Fiction* and Courtney Stephens's *Terra Femme*

Dec 12 - Filmforum 50: Steve Anderson's *Reality Frictions* with Marlon Fuentes's *Bontoc Eulogy*, at the UCLA Film & TV Archive Billy Wilder Theater

Dec 14 – Filmforum 50: *Three Sparks* by Naomi Uman, LA Premiere, Uman in person

Memberships available, \$40 Student \$75 Individual, \$125 Dual, or \$225 Silver Nitrate

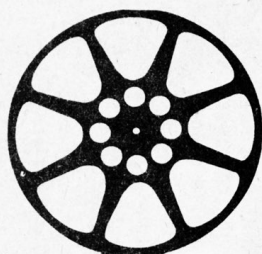
Contact us at [laforum@gmail.com](mailto:laforum@gmail.com).

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DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
City of Los Angeles



# PASADENA FILMFORUM

a non-profit community organization: p.o. box 5631 pasadena 91107 ph. 358-6255

screenings at  the Neighborhood Church 8:00pm sharp

301 n. orange grove blvd — admission 1.50

students 1.00

1976 FIRST QUARTER SERIES

w. colorado blvd.

## THE ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM

thu, jan 22 "The Little Warrior" & "Holy Ghost People"..jim bell & elvino aneloni.  
fri, jan 30 "Louisiana Story"..robert flaherty; "Mosori Monika"..chick strand.  
thu, feb 8 "The Lion Hunters"..jean rouch; "Unsere Afrikareise"..peter kubela.  
fri, feb 13 "Dead Birds"..robert gardner; "One Day More"..valatko gilic.

## THE AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE: WEST COAST

fri, feb 20 "Plastic Haircut"..robert nelson; "Mother's Day"..james broughton;  
\* "Mass for the Dakota Sioux"..bruce baillie; "Desistfilm"..stan brakhage;  
"People Near Me"..ron finne.  
thu, feb 26 "Oh Dem Watermelons"..robert nelson; "All My Life"..bruce baillie;  
"Offon"..scott bartlett; "X Film"..john schofill; "Chinese Fire Drill"  
...will hindle.  
fri, mar 5 "Demonstration Movie"..ron finnie; "Scorpio Rising"..kenneth anger;  
"To Parsifal"..bruce baillie; "Schmeerguntz"..gunver nelson.

## THE FILMS OF PAUL ROBESON

fri, mar 12 "The Emperor Jones" ( 1933, USA ).  
mon, mar 15 "Song of Freedom" (1938, Great Britain).

## SIXTEEN FILMS UNDER FIVE MINUTES

fri, mar 19 "Hot Leatherette"..nelson; "Eleven Different Horses"..lawder; "I  
\* Change I Am the Same"..kennedy/severson; "People"..lipton; "Still"  
..adam; "Angel Blue Sweet Wings"..strand; "Face"..lester; "The  
Long Distance Soft Shoe"..carson; "Breakaway"..conner; "Stand  
Up and Be Counted"..bartlett; "Word Movie"..sharits; "Fatty Dreams  
of Me"..sears; "Mandala"..b y m productions; "A City Trip"..kraning;  
"Scissors"..dewdney; "Shadows and Reflections"..hill.

## FILMS OF SEXY HUMOR

thu, mar 25 "Pagan Rhapsody" & "Hold Me While I'm Naked"..kuchar; "Boggy  
Depot"..mc dowell; "Where Did It All Come From? Where Is It All  
Going?"..faccinto; "Entr'acte"..clair.

## WOMEN IN FILM

mon, mar 29 "My Name Is Oona"..nelson; "My Life In Art"..bartlett; "Crocus"..  
kraning; "Film For My Son"..tesich-sauge.  
fri, apr 2 "Cleo From Five To Seven".. varda.  
fri, apr 9 "Bed And Sofa" ..abram room (USSR, 1927).

\* OPEN SCREENINGS FOLLOW PROGRAMS ON ..feb 20 and mar 19.

+programs subject to change without notice + the Neighborhood Church takes no  
responsibility for nor identifies with any of the films shown.